

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 NEA-07 ISO-00 SS-07 NSC-06 AID-01
/033 W

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R 071303Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3394
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USLO RIYADH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (STONE,RICHARD)
SUBJECT: CODEL STONE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD, JUNE 6

1. SUMMARY:

AL-ASSAD EXPRESSED BOTH LIVELY INTEREST IN INTERNAL
ISRAELI DEVELOPMENTS AND DOUBT THAT SENATOR STONE
HAD ANY REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC RE PROSPECTS FOR ME PEACE UNDER
A BEGIN GOVERNMENT. HE SAW NEED FOR MAJOR U.S. ROLE IF SITUATION
IS TO MOVE TOWARDS PEACE AND FOR PRESIDENT CARTER TO HAVE
STRONG CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. SENATOR STONE HAD ONE AND THREE-QUARTERS HOUR MEETING WITH
AL-ASSAD JUNE 6 ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR AND CODEL AIDES
BRYAN AND SCHOCHET. AL-ASSAD SAID HE PARTICULARLY
WELCOMED CONGRESSIONAL VISITS SINCE THEY HELPED IMMUNIZE
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U.S. CONGRESSMEN AGAINST ZIONIST PROPAGANDA WHICH SO DOMINATED
THE U.S. MEDIA. AL-ASSAD REMARKED HOW VERY SATISFIED HE HAD
BEEN WITH HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER WHO HAD LEFT
IMPRESSION OF ONE SEEKING THE TRUTH AND WANTING A FAIR
SOLUTION. NOTED THAT HE REALIZED CARTER WOULD NEED CON-
GRESSIONAL HELP TO SECURE HIS GOALS. THOSE WHO DID NOT HAVE
THE FULL PICTURE MIGHT ASK WHY SYRIA SO CONCENTRATED ON THE

AMERICAN POSITION TOWARDS MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS. FROM THE BEGINNING IT HAD BEEN AXIOMATIC, THE PRESIDENT ASSERTED, THAT ISRAEL CANNOT COMMIT AGGRESSION OR KEEP ITS FRUITS WITHOUT AMERICAN BACKING. DURING THE LAST U.S. ADMINISTRATION, AMERICAN OFFICIALS OUTLINED TO HIM THEIR PHILOSOPHY THAT "IF ISRAEL GETS MORE ARMS, THIS WILL MAKE IT MORE CONFIDENT AND HELP BRING PEACE TO THE REGION." PRESIDENT HAD NEVER AGREED WITH THIS PHILOSOPHY. NOW WITH BEGIN AS THE PROBABLE NEXT PRIME MINISTER, SOME AMERICANS MIGHT ARGUE HE TOO NEEDED MORE CONFIDENCE AND THEREFORE SHOULD HAVE MORE WEAPONS. SENATOR STONE OBSERVED DRYLY HE HAD RECENTLY MET TWICE WITH BEGIN AND HAD NOT FOUND HIM SUFFERING FROM ANY LACK OF CONFIDENCE.

3. STONE SAID THAT BEGIN APPEARED TO WANT NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE. HE WOULD UNQUESTIONABLY BE A TOUGH NEGOTIATOR AND IS IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS TO FORM HIS GOVERNMENT. WHEN BEGIN SUCCEEDS IN PUTTING A COALITION TOGETHER, HIS FIRST POLICY STATEMENT WILL NOT BE HIS LAST. STONE SAID HE BELIEVED THERE WOULD BE A MUCH MORE RAPID EVOLUTION IN BEGIN'S FOREIGN POLICY ONCE HE IS IN POWER THAN THE PRESS HAS PREDICTED. HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT THE BEST U.S. POSTURE-- "IF WE CAN RESTRAIN OURSELVES"--WOULD BE TO AVOID COMMENT ON THE NEW COALITION'S FIRST POLICY STATEMENT AND WAIT FOR THE SECOND. OUR SILENCE WILL BRING QUICKER CHANGES THAN ANYTHING WHICH WE MIGHT SAY.

4. ANSWERING AL-ASSAD'S QUESTION, STONE SAID HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE LIKUD AND LABOR. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IF DAYAN IS INSTALLED AS NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, THIS WOULD MAKE ANY SUCH UNDERSTANDING HARDER. DAYAN APPEARS TO WANT TO BE PART OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT BUT ONLY AS AN INDEPENDENT PERSON AND WITH THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS. BEFORE GIVING HIS NAME TO THE COALITION, HE WOULD LIKELY STRIKE A HARD BARGAIN. THIS WOULD ALSO BE THE CASE WITH YADIN AND HIS ASSOCIATES; THE FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT IS DEFINITELY MORE THAN TEN DAYS OFF. THE LONGER THE PROCESS, STONE PREDICTED, THE MORE FORTHCOMING WILL BE THE NEW POLICY OF THE COALITION.

5. AL-ASSAD REMARKED HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND ON WHAT BASIS STONE EXPECTED PEACE IN THE AREA. IN SYRIA'S VIEW, THE PRESIDENT COMMENTED, IF MATTERS ARE LEFT TO ISRAEL ALONE THERE IS NO HOPE FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE. HE THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY BEGIN WOULD CHANGE HIS VIEWS AND BELIEVED RATHER THAT HE WOULD BE REINFORCED IN HIS POLICIES BY THE ADHERENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES TO HIS COALITION. STONE REPLIED HE HAD MET DURING THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS WITH PRACTICALLY ALL ISRAELI

LEADERS EXCEPT THOSE OF THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES. HE HAD ALSO
MET WITH THE MILITARY LEADERS AND WITH GOLDA MEIR. HE HAD
SOUGHT TO LEARN NOT JUST WHAT BEGIN HAD SAID IN HIS PAST
CAREER BUT WHAT HE HAD DONE, PARTICULARLY AS A MEMBER FOR
NEARLY THREE YEARS OF THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. EVEN
BEGIN'S LABOR PARTY CRITICS TOLD STONE OF MANY
INSTANCES IN WHICH BEGIN HAD PRIVATELY TAKEN MODERATE POSITIONS
WITH THE CABINET. STONE SAID HE BELIEVED BEGIN WOULD FOLLOW
A COURSE WHICH WOULD ENCOMPASS MODERATION AND SHOW
RESPONSIBILITY, PARTICULARLY IN PRIVATE DECISIONS, IF NOT
IN HIS PUBLIC RHETORIC. PREDICTED HE WILL BE A TOUCH NEGOTIATOR BUT
NONETHELESS ONE WHO WANTS TO NEGOTIATE. STONE REFERRED TO THE UP-
COMING HISTADRUT ELECTION NOTING THAT DESPITE ITS PRO-BUSINESS
ORIENTATION, LIKUD IS FIELDING A CANDIDATE. LIKUD COULD
MAKE SOME MAJOR GAINS ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NOT WIN IN THE HISTADRUT.
THAT VERY PROCESS WILL, HOWEVER, SERVE TO BRING THE LIKUD
CLOSER TO THE VIEWS OF THOSE WHOSE SUPPORT THEY SEEK.
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6. AL-ASSAD ASKED WHAT STONE EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH DURING HIS PRESENT MISSION TO THE AREA. SENATOR REPLIED HE HOPED TO DO SOME GOOD IN SEEING THERE CONTINUED TO BE A GOVERNMENT IN ISRAEL "THAT WOULD RESPOND TO THE MODERATION OF YOUR POSITIONS AND THOSE OF OTHER ARAB LEADERS AND HELP MOVEMENT TOWARDS A JUST SETTLEMENT." NOTED HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO PERFORM THAT TASK BY A NUMBER OF HIS COLLEAGUES, INCLUDING SOME SENIOR ONES. AL-ASSAD SAID THE PRESS HAD PUBLISHED VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF HIS MISSION. SOME SAID SENTAOR HAD COME WITH MESSAGE TO LIKUD FROM CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FRIENDLY TO ISRAEL, ASKING THE NEW LEADERSHIP TO BE MODERATE. OTHERS SAID SENATOR WAS TRAVELING ONLY TO INFORM HIMSELF AS CHAIRMAN. STONE SAID THERE WAS TRUTH IN BOTH ACCOUNTS. HE HAD BROUGHT MESSAGES AND THEY HAD BEEN WELL RECEIVED. HE PRESONALLY WAS PERSUADED THAT CARTER'S INITIATIVES CAN AND WILL SUCEED. HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE PEACE PROCESS WOULD GO ON.

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7. AL-ASSAD COMMENTED HE BELIEVED EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION DEPENDS MORE ON THE U.S. THAN ON ISRAEL. WHETHER BEGIN OR ANYONE ELSE LEADS THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, "EVEN A CHILD KNOWS THAT ISRAEL CANNOT ADOPT AN ATTITUDE IN CONFLICT WITH THAT OF THE USG." HE REMARKED THAT SOME OF BEGIN'S STATEMENTS IMPLIED A KIND OF THREAT TO CARTER. STONE ACKNOWLEDGED THIS, OBSERVING IT WAS A FUNCTION OF THE ISRAELI ELECTION RESULTS. BEGIN'S PARTY IS RESPONDING TO THE FEELING OF YOUNGER VOTERS, PARTICULARLY ORIENTAL JEWS, "WHO WANT TO FEEL CAPABLE OF BEING INDEPENDENT, WHO FEEL A NEW NEED FOR PRIDE." BEGIN HAS RECOGNIZED THIS CURRENT AND IS MOVING AHEAD OF IT SO AS NOT BE BE SUBMERGED BY IT. STONE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT ISRAELI PEOPLE WANT A SETTLEMENT. HE ALSO NOTED THAT MANY OF BEGIN'S VOTES CAME FROM ISRAELI MILITARY; THEY DO NOT WANT ANOTHER WAR AS THEY WOULD BE THE FIRST TO LOSE THEIR LIVES. THE SOLDIERS WOULD WELCOME SETTLEMENT. BEGIN FACES TWO BROAD CURRENTS: A DESIRE FOR GREATER INDEPENDENCE AND A DESIRE FOR SETTLEMENT. HE IS NOT JUST NEGOTIATING BETWEEN VARIOUS FACTIONS BUT ALSO RESPONDING TO THE DESIRES OF THE ISRAELI PEOPLE. PART OF HIS MANDATE IS TO EXPRESS TOUGHNESS BUT ANOTHER PART IS TO COME TO GRIPS WITH A JUST SETTLEMENT.

8. AL-ASSAD QUESTIONNED THIS INTERPRETATION, SAYING HE DOUBTED THAT THE VOTE OF THE ISRAELI MILITARY FOR BEGIN MEANT THEY DO NOT WANT WAR. PRESIDENT SAID HE BELIEVED THERE WAS NO MILITARY MAN IN ISRAEL WHO IS UNAWARE THAT BEGIN IS NOT RPT NOT THE MAN FOR A PEACE SETTLEMENT. STONE REPLIED THAT THE

YOUNG SOLDIERS SEEMS TO CONSIDER BEGIN AS HAVING THE ENERGY TO PROPOSE NEW SOLUTIONS. THEY SEE THE OLD LEADERSHIP AS TIRED AND LACKING THE VIGOR FOR NEGOTIATIONS. HE PERSONALLY DID NOT KNOW IF THIS WAS A CORRECT ANALYSIS BUT THIS WAS WHAT HE HAD HEARD. A PERIOD OF TIME LEADING TO PEACE WAS NEEDED BUT THE ISRAELI VOTERS HAD SHOWN THAT THEY WANTED ACTION AND POSITIVE ACTION. THEY HAD VOTED FOR VIGOR AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STRENGTH. AL-ASSAD SHRUGGED, OBSERVING THAT TIME WILL SHOW THE TRUTH, AND ADDED, "I DOUBT IF SENATOR STONE IS CONVINCED OF EVERYTHING HE HAS SAID." SENATOR SMILINGLY REPLIED, HE MIGHT BE WRONG BUT HE WAS NEVER IN DOUBT ABOUT WHAT HE SAID.

9. AL-ASSAD CONTINUED THAT VARIOUS POLLS IN ISRAEL HAVE SHOWN THAT ISRAEL WANTS PEACE BUT ONLY ON ISRAELI TERMS. EVEN BEGIN WANTS THAT KIND OF PEACE. IT WILL BE FINE WITH ISRAEL IF THE ARABS SAY THEY WILL GIVE UP THEIR TERRITORIES AND NO LONGER FIGHT FOR THEM. YES, BEGIN HAD SAID HE WAS READY TO GO TO GENEVA AND SIGN A PEACE DOCUMENT BUT THIS WILL BE ONE WHICH WILL "SPREAD ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES." ANYWAY, THE PRESIDENT SAID, THE SYRIAN POSITION WILL BE VERY CLEAR AND WILL NOT CHANGE ONE IOTA WHETHER DAMASCUS DEALS WITH BEGIN, PRES OR DAYAN. SYRIA SINCERELY WANTS PEACE BUT A JUST ONE. EVEN IF WE MUST FIGHT HUNDREDS OF YEARS, WE WILL NOT GIVE UP ONE INCH OF OUR LAND OCCUPIED IN 1967 UNDER ANY PRETEXT, WHETHER THAT PRETEXT IS COUCHED IN TERMS OF MODIFICATIONS OF BORDERS OR SECURE BORDERS OR ANY OTHER FORMULA. IF ISRAEL CONTINUES TO OBSTRUCT EFFORTS AIMED AT SECURING A JUST PEACE, WHICH INCLUDES PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, A HEAVY PRICE WILL BE PAID. THIS PRICE WILL BE PAID BY ISRAEL BECAUSE THE FUTURE WITHOUT QUESTION IS WITH THE ARABS AND NOT WITH ISRAEL. EVEN AMERICA KNOWS IT WILL ONE DAY GIVE UP ITS SUPPORT OF ISRAEL AND ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INTERESTS OF ITS PEOPLE, ITS SELF-INTEREST. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT A GREAT POWER LIKE THE U.S. CAN BE LEAD AROUND BY ANOTHER STATE SUCH AS ISRAEL TO SUPPORT AGGRESSION. HUMANITY IS MOVING QUICKLY AGAINST ALL FORMS OF AGGRESSION."

10. A FURTHER ARMS SUPPLY WILL NOT SOLVE ISRAEL'S PROBLEM, AL-ASSAD CONTINUED, THE ARABS WILL HAVE EVEN MORE ARMS IN THE FUTURE. IF ISRAEL GETS ATOMIC WEAPONS, THE ARABS WILL ALSO. AND THE NUMBER OF ATOMIC BOMBS ISRAEL CAN SUPPORT IS LESS THAN THOSE THE ARABS WILL BE ABLE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TOLERATE. THESE ARE, THE PRESIDENT ACKNOWLEDGED,
PESSIMISTIC VIEWS WHICH ONE DOES NOT LIKE TO TALK ABOUT.
BUT HE WAS TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE WORST EVENTUALITIES,
WITH BOTH ARABS AND ISRAELIES GETTING THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE
WEAPONS. IN SUCH CASE VICTORY WILL BE WITH THE ARABS.
"THEREFORE, IF WE MANIFEST A DESIRE TO GO ONE STEP TOWARDS
PEACE, ISRAEL WHOULD GO TWENTY BUT JUST THE OPPOSITE IS
HAPPENING." IT IS UNREASONABLE, AS-ASSAD OBSERVED, TO FOCUS
ON WHAT THE YOUTH OF ISRAEL WANTS AND IGNORE THE WANTS OF ARAB
YOUTHS. HE CONTRASTED THE AGED LIKUD LEADERS WITH THE
YOUTHFUL LEADERSHIP IN THE ARAB WORLD. BEGIN'S GENERALSHIP
IS OLD STYLE, USELESS TO MODERN WARFARE. BUT, THE PRESIDENT
STRESSED, HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS FROM
ONLY ONE POINT OF VIEW: WOULD THEY CONSTITUTE AN OBSTRUCTION OF
WORK TOWARDS PEACE?

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11. AL-ASSAD ASSERTED SYRIA WILL NOT STOP WORKING
FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. THE ARABS WILL NOT KEEP SILENT ABOUT
DEVELOPMENTS OF THE DISPLACED PERSONS IN REFUGEE CAMPS. HE
POINTED OUT THAT 170,000 SYRIAN INHABITANTS FROM THE GOLAN
HEIGHTS ARE STILL GETTING MONTHLY SUBSIDIES FROM HIS GOVERN-

MENT AS DISPLACED PERSONS. THIS CANNOT CONTINUE FOR EVER.
"FURTHERMORE, WHEN ISRAELI LEADERS TALK ABOUT PEACE, IF SUCH
PEACE DOES NOT RESTORE SYRIAN RIGHTS, WHY SHOULD WE WANT
IT; IF ANYONE SAYS PEACE MUST BE ESTABLISHED TO STOP THE
SACRIFICE OF LIFE, WE REPLY THAT IF ISRAEL, AS THE AGGRESSOR,
IS WILLING TO SACRIFICE AND TO MAINTAIN ITS OCCUPATION, THEN
THE ARABS SHOULD BE EVEN MORE WILLING TO SACRIFICE. THE ARAB
DESIRE FOR PEACE IS GENUINE BUT OUR CONCEPT OF WHAT
JUST PEACE REQUIRES WILL BE UNAFFECTED BY WHOMEVER RULES
ISRAEL. BEGIN'S TOUGHNESS MAY BE JUST A TACTIC ; IN ANY
CASE IT WILL FAIL." SUMMING UP, PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE
FORESAW A GREAT TASK AHEAD FOR THE USG ESPECIALLY FOR
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THE CONGRESS, THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
AND THE SENATOR'S SUB-COMMITTEE. SYRIA ASKED ONLY
THAT THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE MATCH ITS RESPONSIBILITY AS A
SUPER POWER.

12. SENATOR STONE REPLIED THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED THE JOB OF
SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ONLY AFTER BEING ENCOURAGED TO DO SO
BY EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR GHORBAL AND THE LATTER'S COLLEAGUES
IN WASHINGTON. HE DID NOT TAKE THE JOB TO BE UNFAIR TO THE
ARAB PEOPLE. HE NOTED THAT WITHIN ISRAEL THERE WAS AN IN-
CREASING PROPORTION OF ORIENTAL JEWS WHO SPEAK AND THINK
IN ARABIC. STONE SAID HE HOPED INTERCHANGES WOULD INCREASING-
LY TAKE PLACE BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS IN ARABIC. NO
ONE IN THE UP-COMING NEGOTIATIONS IS GOING TO GET ALL HE
WANTS. EVEN IF THEY DO, THEY WILL NOT GET IT ALL AT ONCE.
KILLING AND MAIMING MUST STOP. SENATOR PLEDGED TO DO ALL
HE COULD TO GET ISRAEL TO BE FORTHCOMING AND SAID HE KNEW
AL-ASSAD WOULD DO THE SAME FROM HIS SIDE. AL-ASSAD THEN
EXPOUNDED AT LENGTH SAYING HE WISHED THE SENATOR TO UNDER-
STAND SYRIA'S DIFFICULTIES WITH ISRAEL WERE NOT OVER RELIGION
BUT OVER THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF ZIONISM. THE ISSUE
IN THIS REGION HAD NEVER BEEN RELIGION. SOME JEWISH LEADERS UNDER
THE PRETEXT OF SAVING THEIR PEOPLE FROM MISERY HAVE DONE
THEM MUCH HARM, WHETHER OR NOT THEY WERE SINCERE IN WHAT
THEY SOUGHT. HE DESCRIBED SYRIA'S NON-SECTARIAN POLICY. REFERRING
TO SYRIA'S INTERVENTION IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS, HE SAID
SOME HAD TRIED TO DEPICT THIS AS A CHRISTIAN/MUSLIM CON-
FLICT. SYRIA HAD PERSEVERED WITHIN ITS LINE OF ACTION
IN LEBANON DESPITE CERTAIN CRITICS WHO SAID DAMASCUS WAS
TAKING A PRO-CHRISTIAN POLICY IN LEBANON. PRESIDENT CONCLUDED
SAYING THAT HE WISHED TO RESTATE HIS SINCERE DESIRE FOR
PEACE AND TO ASSURE STONE THAT HIS COUNTRY'S ORIENTATION
TOWARD PEACE WOULD NOT CHANGE. THE SENATOR THANKED AL-ASSAD
FOR SHARING HIS IDEAS AND GRANTING SO LONG AN INTERVIEW.
THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HIS THANKS FOR THE SENATOR'S EFFORTS
AND SAID HE WOULD BE WELCOME BACK IN SYRIA AT ANY TIME.

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HE ASKED THAT SENATOR STONE CONVEY HIS WARMEST REGARDS TO
PRESIDENT CARTER.

13. AT SENATOR'S REQUEST, AMBASSADOR TELEPHONED TWO
FOLLOWING POINTS AFTER THE MEETING TO PRESIDENT'S INTERPRETER
WHICH SENATOR HAD INTENDED TO MAKE DURING THE MEETING. FIRST,
THAT THE SENATOR WISHED TO EXPRESS HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE
IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CONDITION OF THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY
AS A RESULT OF THE CHANGE IN SYRIAN REGULATIONS. SECOND,
THE SENATOR HOPED THAT THE CASES OF THOSE SYRIAN JEWISH LADIES
RECEIVING MARRIAGE PETITIONS FROM US CITIZENS WOULD BE PROCESSED
AND APPROVED EXPEDITIOUSLY. THE SENATOR ASKED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S
REPLY BE RELAYED TO HIH. INTERPRETER PROMISED ADVISE PRESIDENT
IMMEDIATELY.

14. THIS MESSAGE NOT CLEARED WITH SENATOR STONE PRIOR TO
HIS DEPARTURE FROM DAMASCUS.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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